

50TH BIRTHDAY OF THE VERNON HILL AMERICAN LEGION POST NO. 435

## HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 16, 1998

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the 50th year that the Vernon Hill American Legion Post has served the community and honored our veterans in Worcester. To commemorate this event, I would like to enter into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the history of Post No. 435 as recounted by Past Commander, John F. O'Connor. This post of the American Legion has a unique history, and I believe that Mr. O'Connor's account clearly shows that the group of men and women involved with the Vernon Hill Post are true American heroes.

The text of his history follows.

In the fall of 1947, a group of young veterans were standing in front of Joe's Spa, across the street from Vernon Hill Park, getting ready to start a touch football game. There, they were approached to attend a meeting at 9 Ames Street at the home of long-time legionnaire, James B. Lawless, to discuss forming an American Legion Post on Vernon Hill.

Somewhat reluctantly, the young veterans gave up their touch football game and walked to the Lawless home two blocks away, and signed the request to the Worcester County Commander, Bill Blanchard, for permission to create the Vernon Hill Post American Legion. He denied the initial request because Worcester already had 16 American Legion Posts, more than an adequate number. Commander Blanchard sent word that if the Vernon Hill Veterans wanted to join, there were plenty of nearby posts to accommodate them. In typical Vernon Hill fashion, the group of reluctant joiners now became determined to have their own post.

Mr. Lawless, a World War I veteran, with Edward F. Wall, presented the Post's case before the Worcester County Council meeting in Upton. Their persuasiveness and persistence paid off, and a charter was granted in the Spring of 1948 to the Vernon Hill Post American Legion #435.

That was the inauspicious debut of what is now the second largest American Legion Post in Worcester County, numbering almost 600 members in the fiftieth year of its existence.

The Post needed quarters, but we also needed a treasury to pay the rent. Ed Wall, and another member, the late Chester G. Trembowicz, the only ones that were working at the time, lent the Post the money to rent our first quarters in a vacant store at 35 Granite Street for \$35 a month. Finally having a "Home", the Post started to raise funds. A bar was constructed with a can of beer selling for 20 cents. A ping-pong table was installed in the cellar and one of the first television sets in the neighborhood was purchased with proceeds from a minstrel show. A huge safe (still being used today) which almost caused the demise of member Billy Reynolds, was donated from its old home on Lamartine Street to Granite Street. In 1951, the Vernon Hill Post purchased a home at 154 Vernon Street for the sum of \$16,500. The Post continued to grow in its new home that featured what the late Joe Fitzgerald called the "Chinese room."

As the post grew and prospered, so did its social functions. Who can forget the New

Year's parties at the old "Johnny Hynes Ballroom"? How many can remember the Past Commanders' banquets that graduated from an upstairs loft at Alaries Tower House on the Cherry Valley/Worcester Line, to the Towncrest on Lake Avenue, to Jimmy O'Day's Edgemere Lodge? How many present can recall the sumptuous steak dinner arranged by Tim Mara and the late Ed Piliski at Thompson's Lodge in Westboro? Everyone present at the banquet marveled at the deal our two chairman had arranged—until they got the bill that almost bankrupted our meager treasury.

Who among us can forget the first New Year's Eve party held in these quarters before we had tile on the floor? We danced on the cement floor and had black legs for a week. A great time was had by all on that first occasion in our own hall, the first of many great times in this room.

The state convention in 1948 was held in Worcester, a rather huge affair at the time . . . World War I veterans joined by World War II veterans just blending into civilian life. Who can forget the huge parade in downtown Worcester featuring superlative marching bands and handsome Governor, Maurice Tobin, in a Panama suit? The new Post Vernon Hill, now about 30 strong, marched in the back of the host delegation behind a huge banner that read "Worcester's Baby Post, Vernon Hill American Legion #435, watch us grow". How prophetic. John McDavitt, a navy veteran, now residing in Brookfield, was dressed as an infant, albeit smoking a cigar and possessing a can of the beverage of moderation, pushed in a baby carriage by his "father", the late Bill Wall, and his "mother" Connie Brosnihan, now residing in Enfield, Connecticut.

In 1966, a bright young navy veteran brought what many older, more experienced, more mature members thought was a preposterous proposition to construct a hospital in Vietnam to honor the boys and girls of Worcester County who lost their lives in this faraway conflict. In 1967, after much effort and preparation by the initiator of the project, the day arrived when all of the "Doubting Thomases" became firm believers in Past Commander Frank Carroll. We became such believers that if Frank said Pope John Paul II is expected to attend tonight's affair, we would keep an eye on the door.

Who could ever forget this fabulous extravaganza? General Westmoreland, the commissioner of baseball, General Eckerrett, and Under Secretary of State Katzenbach drank coffee in the kitchen right in these quarters with Jim Donahue and many other dignitaries. At the bar, the late Gordon McCrea told stories about his football days at Gaskill Field. Who among us doesn't have an avid memory of the affair at the Memorial Auditorium? Present were the celebrities on stage with Marilyn Mayes. There was security everywhere, and the pride of our membership was unmistakable. This humanitarian gesture to assist Dr. Turpin of Project Concern to construct a hospital in the Central Highlands of Vietnam was motivated by an American Legion Post in Worcester led by its imaginative, fearless, persistent, young Commander, Frank Carroll.

The vast number of volunteers, plus the organizational genius called Frank Carroll, made the project a huge success. The Vernon Hill Post American Legion was brought into the spotlight and our post became the most recognizable and envied Veteran's organization in the entire state.

This organization is also extremely active in youth and community affairs. The post's generosity to all who are deprived and unfortunate is well known, but its finest hour is its magnanimous support of the blind children in Ashburnham, Massachusetts.

This post is deeply involved in civil affairs coupled with the welfare of our own community and state. In 1969, an issue of deep concern to all our citizens was automobile insurance. Does that have a familiar ring? In this very room a forum was held to inform our members and all our citizens about a new form of auto insurance. One of the panelists who was proposing the system was a young State Representative from Brookline who went on to some degree of fame and notoriety, Michael Dukakis.

And what American Legion Post in the world had its own basketball and softball leagues where everyone who played had to be a member? Shea's Tavern, Leavitt Drugs, Old Timers, The Associates, and the Livewires were all winners. Does anyone remember the classic confrontation in a gym not far from here between the late Past Commander Bob Bruso and a young Priest, Father Ed Tinsley, now the Vicar General of the Diocese of Worcester?

Even when we didn't have much of a treasury, the post sponsored a team in the Gehrig-Ruth League which continues to this day. This late Jim Spaulding and child welfare chairman, the late Past Commander Ed Cove put together the finest charitable program of an American Legion Post anywhere. In addition to baseball, our post has an unparalleled record in the area of programs for our youth. The scholarship program has aided innumerable sons and daughters of Post members to secure education at the collegiate level. The Boys State Chairman Past Commander John F. O'Connor and many members have participated in the mock trial at the convocation of Boys State.

Who could ever forget the "Minstrel Show" assisted by the late Bob Brady and the spontaneous with of the Past Commander, the late James Spaulding. These various musical delights features many talents, now departed, included John "Blue Eyes" Mahoney. In recent years, we were entertained by our Vernon Hill Legionaries, led by Past Commander Howard Harvey. Who can't reflect on the many occasions that our talented, dedicated choristers, George Handley, Mike Donovan, Pat Carmody and our own little girl now grown to a young lady, Kristen Carlstrom, enthralled us and the always full-capacity audiences?

Our own St. Patrick Day "Hooleys" were always great affairs. Does anyone here remember the Irish Tenor, Tom Riley? The fabulous corned beef and cabbage meals put out mainly by Chet Mills and the late Dick Mitchell were something?

Speaking of food, does anyone remember the sumptuous meals of Duffy Caterers and his Harvard beets? How many can remember the wonderful evenings of superb music of Townsmen and the gifted Janie Morin, fresh from her appearance at Fenway Park in 1967? Down through the years we also had some superb Italian and Polish nights.

What veteran's organization holds its own Memorial Mass and breakfast honoring its deceased members? Recently, the Mass breakfast have been held right here in these quarters with great success and numbers. Citizens of Worcester who have made a contribution to the well-being of our community are honored with an award each year. The award is now highly coveted and respected in this city.

The Vernon Hill Post was the first group of any sort to go on record in favor of the construction of the Worcester Civic Center, now known as the Centrum. Where would Worcester be if we didn't have the Centrum now? The Vernon Hill Post was also the first to endorse the connecting highway from downtown Worcester to the Massachusetts Turnpike in Millbury, a vital link to the economic well-being of our city.

This last December 11th, over 200 senior citizens who ordinarily wouldn't have a joyous Christmas season were our guests here for the 20th year. Howard Harvey and his chorus, the chefs, the waitresses and waiters, the people who contribute their talents, time and resources, are to be commended for their charity and concern.

On occasions, the boys at Nazareth Home in Leicester have been the guests of the Post at the circus, the Red Sox, and the Celtics? Our Honor Guard, especially Bud Hall, has always been present at parades, funerals and other functions. Our antique fire truck is always at the disposal of children of this region.

When you mention names, you run the risk of neglecting someone who has made a sizable contribution to this Post. None the less, we would be remiss if we didn't name some men who have passed on who have made this a great Post. They must be looking down from their heavenly perch with pride; the founder, James B. Lawless, Past Commanders, John C. Wall, Chester C. Trembowitz, Raymond Jermyn, Robert Brusio, Albert Spring, James Spaulding, George Naum, Ed Cove, Bob Coakley, Ed Bulleus, and Red Cochran. We have come a long way in the last five decades from that initial gathering on Ames Street!

We are now the second largest in membership of any American Legion Post in Worcester County. However, by all standards and criteria, the Vernon Hill Post is universally recognized and acclaimed as the finest, most active contributing veteran's organization anywhere. One of our own Past Commanders, Byron McCluskey, was a Department Past Commander, bringing great honor to this post.

This night should serve as a tribute to a great many men who have worked together to make this occasion possible. The cooperation that has made this evening a success has been the hallmark of this group over the years.

In the Preamble to the American Legion Constitution, it says "that we must consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness". May we always continue to look after our fellow human beings with care, concern and compassion.

"Happy Fiftieth Birthday, Vernon Hill Post #435."

#### TRIBUTE TO THE LEGACY OF WENGER FARM

#### HON. BOB SCHAFFER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 16, 1998*

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the history and legacy of one of Colorado's oldest historic farms, the Wenger Farm, and to pay tribute to all of those that worked to create, operate and protect it. Patented in 1894, the land has been in the family ever since. At the Colorado State Fair, the Wenger family received the Centennial Farm Award in recognition of their history with the land. Located near Yuma, Colorado the farm was homesteaded by Fred Wenger. Bob Wenger and his wife Kathryn took over the farm after Bob served an illustrious duty to his country in the Marine Corps in World War II. Now their son Dick continues to operate the farm where he raises cattle and grows corn. The Wengers are fine examples of what good stewards of the land

Colorado farmers have been. Mr. Speaker, the Wenger Farm has left a lasting legacy for their family, and all of their friends and neighbors in Yuma County. I salute them, and all of the good people who worked to preserve that legacy. We all have a lot to gain from preserving our history and preserving the farming way of life.

#### TRIBUTE TO ANGELO CATANI

#### HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 16, 1998*

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take this opportunity to say a few words about Angelo Catani, a fellow Floridian, who will be retiring next month.

Angelo distinguished himself in a variety of positions throughout his 30 plus years of service, including his initial employment with the American Machine & Foundry, where he was responsible for installation of the hydraulic lift system on the Titan missile program.

He followed up that position by joining General Electric Co. where for the next 12 years he was involved in engineering programs such as the update of the Possidon fired control systems, Launch Complex-34 propellant transfer system at Kennedy Space Center and the Saturn V, S-IVB stage support equipment.

Following a successful career at General Electric, Mr. Catani joined Aerojet Ordnance Company as Vice President, Ammunition and was responsible for the development of Aerojet's 25mm ammunition programs. In 1983, he joined Olin as Vice President and General Manager of its Defense Production operation. Subsequently, in 1987 he was also appointed President of the Ordnance Division; then in 1993 was elected to the position of Corporate Vice President, of the Olin Corporation; and, finally, in 1997 he was elected Vice President of PRIMEX Technologies, Inc.

Among his many other accomplishments, Mr. Catani was an active member of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), and the National Defense Industrial Association (INDIA). In 1997, Mr. Catani was inducted into the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame.

Mr. Catani also serves with distinction on the Board of Trustees at the University of Tampa, and is Chairman of the Tampa Bay Watch Foundation. I wish Angelo and his wife, Paige, all the best as they look forward to their years of retirement, in which they will split their time between Florida and their home in Durango, Colorado.

#### POSTAL EMPLOYEES SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

#### HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, September 14, 1998*

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Postal Employees Safety Enhancement Act and in support of safe workplaces across our nation.

This important legislation extends the ability of the Occupational Safety and Health Admin-

istration to regulate the U.S. Postal Service as it would for any private business. This is welcome legislation for the over 2,000 postal employees in the State of Vermont, and the hundreds of thousands in the country.

This bill is supported by the American Postal Workers Union, the National Association of Lettercarriers, the Mailhandlers (Laborers International), and the Rural Lettercarriers Association—every union that represents our postal employees. We should listen to our postal workers who desire the full protection of OSHA.

Mr. Speaker, OSHA is a vital piece of our social contract. It was passed in response to unsafe working conditions that were found throughout the United States, and it has prevented countless injuries and fatalities on the job. Now, 27 years after the passage of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, we should continue our commitment that every worker in America has the right to a safe workplace.

What we have before us today is legislation that says to many of the federal government's most valued employees—those who process and deliver the mail and keep our country on the move: We honor your work and we will protect you from workplace hazards.

Mr. Speaker, every American deserves the full benefits of an OSHA compliant workplace. I urge strong support for our nation's hard working postal employees. Pass this legislation for them, for the people who love them, and for the country that employs them.

#### RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

#### HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 16, 1998*

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Resources Committee, I have worked to advance and strengthen tribal self-governments and promote private enterprise on our Nation's reservations. One tribe that has been a national leader in exercising its self-determination to build a strong tribal government and reservation-based economy is the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

Through the vision of Chief Phillip Martin, the Tribe used its sovereignty to develop a tribal economy to foster a highly responsive approach to providing traditional government services on the reservation. When Chief Martin became leader of the Tribe, he knew that the tribal government had to assume responsibility of government functions rather than they rely on the Bureau of Indian Affairs to take care of its members.

Dramatic gains have occurred during the past 20 years on the Choctaw Reservation. The average educational level of adult tribal members has jumped from sixth grade in the 1970s to twelfth grade today. Life expectancy has also increased by nearly twenty years, and infant mortality has declined substantially. Through the efforts of the Choctaw Housing Authority, housing for tribal members has risen above substantial levels.

The tribal members of the Choctaw Tribe have worked extremely hard to achieve their vastly improved living standard. The innovative